

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-07 L-03 NSC-07 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-11 NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-03

ARAE-00 DRC-01 /074 W

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P R 281405Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 366

INFO AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

C O N F I D E N T I A L GEORGETOWN 1744

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GY

SUBJECT: GOG TAKES OVER GUYANA'S PRINCIPAL INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. ON SEPTEMBER 26 GOG PURCHASED GUYANA GRAPHIC, LARGEST OF COUNTRY'S TWO GENERAL CIRCULATION DAILY NEWSPAPERS (CIRCULATION ABTUT 32,000 DAILY, 51,000 SUNDAY). GRAPHIC WAS PURCHASED FROM THOMPSON NEWSPAPER ENTERPRISES OF CANADA FOLLOWING THREE DAYS NEGOTIATIONS. PURCHASE PRICE NOT ANNOUNCED PUBLICLY. ONLY OTHER" GENRAL CIRCULATION DAILY, THE CHRONICLE, IS ALREADY GOG-OWNED, ALTHOUGH OPPOSITION PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY'S MIRROR LIMPS ALONG AS A FOUR-PAGE POLITICAL NEWS SHEET WITH CIRCULATION OF ONLY ABOUT 6,000 WEEKDAYS, 10,000 SUNDAY. END UNCLASSIFIED.

2. TOP GRAPHIC OFFICIAL TOLD EMBOFF GRAPHIC PURCHASE WAS BY FORCED SALE. GRAPHIC HAD BEEN NEGOTIATING FOR SEVERAL WEEKS WITH GUYANA TRADES UNION CONGRESS FOR PURCHASE BY THAT BODY FOR GUYANESE DOLS 650,000 (US DOLS 1 EQUQLS ABOUT GUYANESE DOLS 2.17). THOUGH GRAPHIC WAS MONEY-MAKER, THOMPSON PREFERRED TO SELL RATHER THAN CONTINUE FIGHTING GOG HARASSMENT OF PERSONNEL (FORMER EDITOR FIRED UNDER GOG PRESSURE) AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRESSURE. THOMPSON
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TEAM CAME TO GUYANA SEPT 22 FOR TALKS REGARDING PURCHASE.

THOUGH INDEPENDENT EVALUATOR HAD PLACED MARKET PRICE OF GRAPHIC AT GUYANESE 1 MILLION DOLLARS, GOG PROPOSED DOLS GUYANESE 450,000 CASH ON TAKE-IT-OR-LEAVE-IT BASIS. ATTEMPTS BY THOMPSON REPRESENTATIVES TO COMPROMISE AT DOLS 650,000 WERE FRUITLESS, WITH GOG ALLEGEDLY RESPONDING THAT NO OTHER PURCHASER WOULD BE AUTHORIZED BY GOVT AND THAT IF THOMPSON ENTERPRISES REFUSED TO SELL, GOG COULD ENSURE THAT NO PROFITS WERE MADE. IN ADDITION TO GUYANESE DOLS 450,000 TO THOMPSON, GOG IS SUPPLYING GUYANESE DOLS 130,000 (TECHNICALLY HALF IN ITS NAME AND HALF IN THOMPSON'S NAME) TO SEVERANCE PAY FUND. ALL WORKERS GUARANTEED EITHER RETENTION OR SEVERANCE PAY. COMMITTEE WITH TRADE UNION REPRESENTATION SET UP TO DECIDE ON DISPOSITION OF GRAPHIC. GRAPHIC OFFICIAL BELIEVES COMMITTEE WILL CLOSE DOWN PRESENT PRINTING PLANT AND AMALGAMATE GRAPHIC AS AFTERNOON PAPER WITH MORNING CHRONICLE. GRAPHIC OFFICIAL COMMENTED VALUE OF NEWSPRINT IN STOCK ALONE IS GUYANESE DOLS 300,000.

3. COMMENT: DEMISE OF GRAPHIC CAN PROBABLY BE REALISTICALLY INTERPRETED AS DEMISE OF PRINCIPAL REMNANT OF PRESS FREEDOM IN GUYANA, SINCE INDEPENDENT-MINDED EDITOR OF ALREADY GOVT-OWNED CHRONICLE CAN NO LONGER USE ARGUMENT THAT STORY WILL APPEAR IN GRAPHIC TO BACK UP HIS PREFERENCE FOR CARRYING RELATIVELY UNBIASED NEWS, INCLUDING FACTUAL REPORTS OF CRITICISM OF GOVT. THOUGH RADIO DEMERARA AND PPP'S MIRROR REMAIN OUTSIDE GOVT OWNERSHIP, MIRROR ALLOWED TO DANGLE ON THIN STRING OF LIMITED NEWSPRINT AUTHORIZATION WHILE RADIO CONTROLLED THROUGH REQUIREMENT OF ANNUAL RENEWAL AND POSSIBILITY OF SUSPENSION AT ANY TIME OF LICENSE KREBS

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